Reminiscences of Life in the Army and As a Prisoner of War

The following manuscript is a photographed copy of J. S. McCulloch's experience while a prisoner of the Confederate Army, at Camp Ford, Texas, during the last year of the Civil War.

John Scouller McCulloch was born Sept. 5, 1829. He graduated from Jefferson college (now known as Washington and Jefferson) in 1854 and from the Associated Reformed Theological Seminary at Allegheny, Pa. in 1858. He was licensed April 9, 1857 by the Associated Reformed Presbytery of Big Spring, Pa., and ordained Aug. 23, 1857.

He became pastor at Peoria, Ill. in 1857 and remained there until 1864. On March 24, 1859 he married Mary Craig Fulton (born Aug. 29, 1830, at Big Spring, Pa.) To this union were born five sons and one daughter: Ewing (died young) Ida, Bruce, Craig, Paul and Ralph.

In 1864 Rev. McCulloch was called as chaplain to the 77th Regiment of Illinois Volunteers. When this regiment was taken prisoner, the men were incarcerated at Camp Ford. Set free after about four months, by Yankee soldiers, the former prisoners walked to the Mississippi River, and Mr. McCulloch returned to Peoria by boat.

His next pastorate was in New York City, from 1865 to 1877, at the Harlem church on 116th St. Then from 1877 to 1899, he was president of Knoxville (Tenn.) college, one of the earliest colleges for the lately freed negroes.

Monmouth College at Monmouth, Illinois conferred the degree of D. D. on him in 1879.

From 1900 until his death in 1910 he resided in Omaha, Nebraska, preaching occasionally at the Central United Presbyterian Church. Mrs. McCulloch preceded him in death in 1904.

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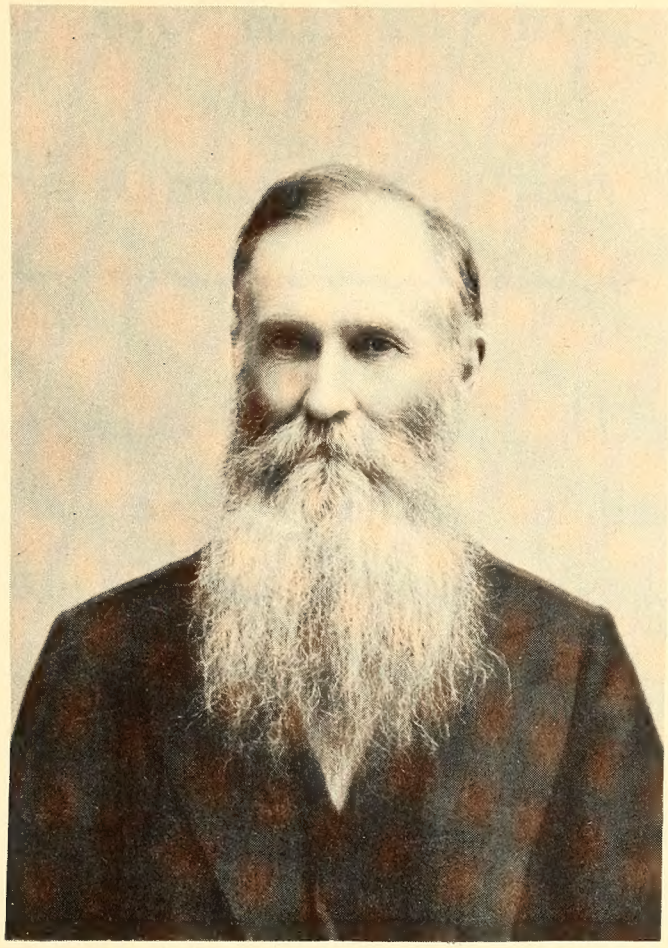

Reminiscences of Life in the Army, and As a Prisoner of War.

The uncertainties of life, to those who go forth to war, render the parting interview between the soldier and his family, peculiarly impressive. Three years of separation; exposure, moral and physical, in camp and battle-field; an unknown grave in a far-off, and perhaps foreign land, are not welcome thoughts; and yet they must crowd into the parting hour.

The scenes of that hour are too sacred and tender to be exposed to the public eye.

It is not necessary to explain how, and why I got into the army. Suffice it to say, that Dr. Pierce, who had been Chaplain of the Seventy-seventh Illinois Regiment for a year or more, was overcome by heat in July 1863, just after the surrender of Vicksburg, and after some time was obliged to resign on account of enfeebled health. When this was made known, a meeting of the company comanders was held and, without any knowledge, or request of mine, I was elected. The colonel then named me to the Governor as the choice of the regiment, and the Governor sent me my commission. I had said all along from the beginning of the war, that, if I should receive an appointment as Chaplain I should feel it my duty to go. Accordingly, after obtaining the assent of the congregation, and presbytery, I accepted the appointment, and com-

mending my little family to the care of a covenant-keeping God, set out for the front, nearly two thousand miles away. I left Peoria, Illinois, on the 18th of March, 1864, and embarked at St. Louis on a government transport for New Orleans.

My business was to preach the gospel, and I had made up my mind to do it whenever an opportunity was afforded. So: when the first Sabbath came, I obtained, without difficulty, the consent of the Captain of the boat to preach whenever and wherever I thought convenient. There were more than two hundred officers and soldiers on board, besides the citizen passengers. Arrangements were made, and notice was given that there would be preaching on the upper deck, where all, who wished to meet, could do so. At the hour appointed, I took my position, and forty or fifty soldiers and citizens gathered around me.

The wind was blowing just hard enough to make me hold on with both hand to keep down the leaves of my Bible. Every time I turned the wind parted my hair in a new place. I announced a Psalm, and read out two lines at a time, and started the tune, when quite a number joined with me, singing as best they could. Singing, reading, and prayer, were concluded, and all seemed to be going on well. But I had scarcely entered upon my sermon, when the Captain discovered a pile of wood on the western shore, and, at once, gave orders to stop, and purchase it. Wood was very scarce on account of guerrilla parties, that were scouring both sides of the Mississippi to prevent the boats from getting it. Union men and negroes would, at the risk of their lives, collect a few cords on the bank at a good place to land, and then hail the first boat to sell it.

You will understand then the sudden change in the order of the day. It seemed to me especially unfortunate. I had not been preaching ten minutes, when the rope was cast ashore, & a hundred soldiers went shouting and singing, and running, and scuffling into the woods to have a little recreation, while the boat was tied up. I hardly knew what to do, for the confusion was very great. But I kept on preaching with all my might, while the wind tossed my hair in every direction. With all my efforts, I could not keep the attention of some of my hearers. And you will not wonder at this, when I tell you some of the scenes that were passing on the bank. One man shot a dog, and he went off, howling most piteously; another caught hold of a large calf, and it ran with him bawling into the brush, while some of my hearers had to fairly bite their

lip to keep from laughing right out. Still another soldier stepped up to a colored lady, who had come out of her cabin, and, grasping her round the waiste, forcibly marched off with her under his arm, while she struggled to get loose, and a hundred voices cheered. All this time, I stood with my back only half turned to these scenes. I did not dare look round in that direction lest I should lose the thread of my discourse, and thus render my first sermon a failure. Those who sat, and listened attentively till I was through, seemed to sympathize with me very much, and even reproached themselves for disrespect, when they were compelled to smile.

I had anticipated difficulties, and I had fully resolved not to be easily frightened, and therefore, I persevered, and went through all the services, thinking that this might be only a common experience

for an army chaplain.

On going down stairs to the Cabin, one of the citizen passengers, who had listened, apparently, with great attention and respect, came up to me very blandly, and after some flattering remark, said "Chaplain, Do you stimulate any?" I politely refused, of course: for it is not fashionable for preachers to drink whiskey even in the army. It gives me pleasure to state, that I was never asked but once by an officer, to take strong drink. They generally took it for granted, that a Chaplain will not drink, and that it would be an offence to offer it. In doing this, they not only showed their respect for the office, but also condemned the practice. It gives me pleasure to state also, that this first experience in army preaching was the worst I ever had. I preached a hundred times afterward, in camp, on the march, in prison, in barracks, on boats, and even

when the men were under arms, and I never was seriously interrupted, except in a few instances, by the brass band, and the drums, and never with evil design.

Having reached New Orleans, and embarked on another steamboat for Red River, I preached the next Sabbath in the cabin to nearly all on board, while the Pilot kept a constant lookout for sharp-shooters on the shore. Everything was as orderly, almost, during the meeting, as in a church. We were not fired upon from the shore, but the pilot-house had a number of bullet-marks from previous attacks. Once, however, it was deemed necessary to fire a cannon from the boat to frighten away some suspicious persons, who were seen in the woods ahead, at a short turn in that crooked river.

Apr 5 I reached the army under General Banks on the 5th. of April in the evening, having spent seventeen days in traveling

two thousand miles. This had to be done mostly at my own expense, because I was not yet mustered into the service; and my pile of money, not large at first, had become very small in deed. It would have failed altogether, had not a Christian friend, at the depot left ten dollars in the palm of my hand as he said good bye.

I found the regiment (77th Ill) camped in a fresh-plowed corn-field near Natchitoches, Louisiana. There were camps all round for miles, and men and officers and wagons, hurrying to and fro in every direction, preparing for a forward movement. I crawled into a common small tent along with my brother, who was a Captain, and two other men. A bayonet, with the point stuck into the ground served as our candle-stick. After reading a chapter from God's word, and kneeling, as best we could in that cramped up place,

I lay down on a rubber blanket between two rows of corn, for my first night's sleep on the ground. Before we had fallen asleep, the Adjutant came round to each Captain's tent, and in a low voice said. Captain: Be ready to move at 5 o' clock in the morning. This would require us to be up at half past three, and so, we were soon asleep.

Accordingly, the head of the column moved at 5, and when the time came for our regiment to fall into the line of march, I turned in with the rest. I was known, personally, to only a few, and I was obliged to get acquainted with both officers and men as we marched along. I had no horse, and hence field and staff officers often insisted on me riding, while they would get off and walk, and men with muskets and knapsacks, said: "Better not refuse a good offer: it's a long way to Shreveport."

In the evening, we held a prayer-meeting, it being Wednesday evening, the regular time for their weekly prayer-meeting. We encamped in line of battle, as nearly as the nature of the ground would permit. It was in the woods, and to me there seemed much confusion — men scraping up dry leaves to make a soft bed, camp-fires crackling, tin pans and cups, and kettles rattling, and orderlies riding rapidly with orders, in every direction — Everything, almost, was new, and strange to me, and I found difficulty in maintaining a devotional spirit, but the old soldiers seemed to be encouraged with the meeting. I went to the head quarters to take the oath, and be mustered in, but the mustering officer could not get at his papers, and I had to wait.
My first day had been spent in the army, and that night I slept very comfortably with the Major in the Colonel's tent.

The next day our advance exchanged occasional shots with the enemy. In the afternoon, the firing became rapid in front, and at times accompanied with artillery. At the same time rain commenced falling, and the pace was quickened, so that for several miles, we could not quite keep up by walking, and were obliged to run at intervals. This was very exhausting to men with their Muskets and Knapsacks and haversacks. The road, too, became slippery, and the air sultry. ~~and~~ When we reached Pleasant hill, quite early in the evening, all were ready for rest. We had marched about thirty-five miles in two days, & were drawn up across an open field in double line of battle. We could see the lines for a long distance, and they looked very warlike. In a few minutes, ambulances began to come in from the skirmish line. There were about forty wounded men, besides

the killed, who had been buried, or left on the ground. Forty-eight hours had not yet elapsed since I joined the regiment, and I found myself among wounded and dying men, who two hours before, had been dashing to and fro on foaming horses, in the full vigor of life and health. Things looked very real and unpoetic. The moans of those men were truly heart-rending. The excitement of the conflict had passed away, and as I approached one after another, doing whatever little turn I could for the relief of their suffering, O how often I had to disappoint the sufferer by telling him that I was not the Doctor! "Oh! Doctor! what shall I do? If I could only get something to ease my pain!" Are you the Doctor? Wont the Doctor soon examine my wound Oh! I cant stand this long. What does he think of my case? All my sympath-

ies were aroused. To many of them the moments were very precious, and yet I hardly knew what to say. One man, shot through the bowels, who had evidently not many hours to live, said he had been brought up in a Christian family in the state of New York, but had lived carelessly, and did not feel prepared to die. Another hoped he could trust his Savior, and die happy. Another lay on the bare floor quietly, and almost motionless, while his brains, were running out of a large hole in his skull, and yet he was uttering mingled sighs and groans. Still another powerful man, with a large hole in his head, and covered with blood, kept toking, and plunging about in an unconscious state, striking his head against a bare bedstead, then lifting himself up with his elbows, and letting his head

fall heavily again upon the bare floor. To have watched him properly, and kept him from mangling himself and disturbing others, would have required the whole time of one nurse.

After something like order had been secured, I went to my regiment, and sat down on a pile of rails beside a camp-fire. The sun had gone down. There was a cold squall of wind and rain every few minutes. I was cold, and damp, and tired, and hungry; and having just witnessed, for the first time, such scenes of blood, you may be sure I was sad. I was, yet, a stranger. The eyes of officers and men were upon me. I must not be alarmed at the results of a mere skirmish; and I did try to assume a measure of indifference, but I shall not soon forget how these grave questions stared upon me that evening. Why do these men thus suffer? Could not all this have been avoided? Who is responsible? And I

began to conceive, as I had never done, the awful criminality of those, who make war without good advice.
The men were soon in their tents asleep, because each one carried a half shelter tent on his knapsack, but the officers, whose tents were in the wagons, had to wait several hours, before the wagons came up. The men had been hurried forward, and the wagons had been thrown into the rear for safety.
It often happens, at such times, that the officers suffer more from exposure than the men. The men carry nearly everything they need, but the officers seldom carry anything, except perhaps a rubber blanket, and haversack.
For the same reason I could not be mustered in that night. The papers were all in the wagons, and the mustering officer said it would take hours to get them. We succeeded in finding a house near by, and took

shelter there from the rain and cold. Many officers crowded in and gathered round the fire to dry and warm themselves, and talk over the prospects of a fight in the morning. Some were very defiant, and maintained that the Rebels would not dare to make a stand, but would simply try to keep us in check. Others shook their heads, called attention to evidence of a large force in front, as we passed over their large camping grounds, and said that if the rebels were going to fight at all, it would be to-morrow; and some even expressed fears that we might have to fight hard. It was nearly eleven o'clock when we got our tents up, supper eaten, and, were down to sleep. Order came to move at 3 o'clock in the morning. This evidently meant business.

Accordingly, at half past one, after less than three hours' sleep, we were awakened quietly, without any drum-beating, as

is usual in camp. Breakfast was soon over, and as it lacked a few minutes of three, we sat down, and had family worship. The family consisted of three. The Lieut. Col. and Major and myself. A chapter was read, and prayer was offered and still, we had five minutes to spare. The Lieut. Col. seemed anxious, and he frankly confessed to me, that he feared he might not get through well. Said he, The Colonel has always been in command, when we had a battle, but now he is absent, and I dont know how I shall get along, but I hope your prayer may be answered; for", said he, with great earnestness, "although I have not been a professor of religion, I have my own views about the providence of God, and I wish some day to have a long talk with you about these things." But the hour had come. He mounted his horse, and gave the command. "Fall in" and I picked

up my overcoat and blanket, and felt my way along the muddy road, as best I could, like the rest. There was no music, no shouting as on other mornings, no loud talking. It was very dark. Five miles had been passed at daylight, and at 9 o'clock a line of battle was formed, extending into the fields and woods on both sides of the road. Then, after firing a few shells, the order came "Forward". Each man kept straight ahead, as nearly as possible. If he came to a fence he pulled it down, or climed over it, If he came to a house, or stable he went round, and then closed up the line again. If to a stream, he jumped over, or waded through it, but kept steadily onward, firing into every fence and clump of bushes, that might conceal an enemy. The enemy kept slowly and stubbornly falling back, firing into our line whenever they could

find a hiding place to fire from. Very seldom could an enemy be seen, and then only for a moment as he escaped over a hill, or jumped from one tree or thicket to another. I had already learned all I wished to know about the zip of bullets. Sometimes they flew high over our heads, sometimes they fell at our feet entirely spent, while others came so near that we looked at our hats and coat skirts to see if they had made a hole.
And yet no man was wounded until about noon. And then the very first man that was struck, was killed in an instant. It was our Lieut. Col. the very man with whom I had prayed and talked a few hours before in the tent. General Lee had called him to the side of the road to give him some order, and while he stood beside the general's horse, talking, a bullet struck him under the eye, and he fell without uttering a word. In talking

with the General the Lt. Col. had fallen considerably behind, and probably not one of his own regiment saw him fall. Word was at once sent to the Major, that the command now devolved upon him, and the word went rapidly along the line, that Lieut. Col. Webb was killed, but no one could tell how, until perhaps a half hour after, when I saw the General, and received the particulars as I have described.

In the mean time the line moved forward, sometimes very slowly and cautiously, and at other times walking fast, and even running over fences, through ravines, and underbrush, firing irregularly, and yelling at every volley. There was a double line, and one kept a few rods in the rear of the other. We went in the advance for a mile or so, and then we would let the rear line go before

while we followed up closely for support. In this way we advanced for six or eight miles until about 2 o'clock in the afternoon, when we came to a halt. It was soon found the enemy were in strong force right in front, although we could see nothing whatever like an enemy. There we were with only one division, and our main army five miles in the rear. It was perhaps too late then to attempt to fall back. At all events we did not fall back. Our regiment, when in line, was entirely in a corn-field, and the other regiments extended as far as they could reach, both on the right and left, so as to make the line as long as possible. Then all lay down, and as we had but little sleep the night before most of us were soon asleep on the soft, fresh plowed ground. I slept very little, but many slept soundly, having marched nearly eighteen miles

After lying two hours or more, a few bullets passed over us, and I was surprised to see how quickly the old soldiers squatted lower. Every man was wide awake in an instant. There were no stumps or rocks to hide behind, and hence every one tried to get down as flat between the furrows as he could. Then, in less than a minute, came the word "forward", and "fix bayonets". I laid my overcoat and blanket on the pile of knapsacks, and walked forward, keeping just a few steps behind the line as it advanced. Having reached the fence we climed over in some places, and pulled it down in others, and kept going on into the woods. By this time the bullets were flying very thickly, and a tree or log or stump was a welcome shelter. Slowly, however the line pressed forward — men springing forward a few steps at a time, from tree to tree, so as not to get too much out of line, then firing,

loading, and springing forward again until another field was reached at the opposite side of the woods. Here our men held their position behind a fence. The shells and shot from the cannon were bring down the limbs over our heads, and many were struck by bullets, and buckshot. The noise, and excitement were terrible. Men, as they stood up and fired through the fence, seemed to be angry. During this time I was busy with two wounded men. The first was shot in the breast, and very much hurt by a spent ball, but I found, on examination, that he was not entirely disabled, and I started him to the rear, advising him to go as fast as he could. The other was shot through the arm, and in the side. I got his cartridc-box and coat off, and bandaged the arm with an old shirt, and then tried to help him to the rear, but I found there was

heavy firing behind us, and I gave it up, and got him down into a little gutter, which the water had made in the hollow, and where I thought he would not be much exposed. I left him, and went forward to the line, and saw another man lying in a hole flat on his face, and only his feet above the ground. I said, "Where are you hurt," but he gave me no satisfactory answer, and although I could see no blood, I thought he must be badly wounded. He then turned his face a little and said he was wounded in the leg, but when I tried to lift him out, I found he didn't wish to get out, and I left him as a hopeless coward. As I walked away, a Lieutenant, who had been watching me, laughed, and said, "That's a skulker. He's not hurt." At this moment the bullets were flying over our heads, and our danger was mainly from the flank. Seeing no one requiring

attention just there, I started towards the left, and had made only a few steps, when, to my astonishment, one of our men, who was standing behind a tree firing, called out. Chaplain, you cant go in there! Our men are not there! But I only reproved him for standing back so far, lest he should fire into our own men. I had not, however, gone ten steps farther until I saw that he was right; for a rebel gun flashed its flame and smoke in the wrong direction, and I slipped back, and protected myself, as best I could. Just then an order came from the general to fall back. I went with the rest, but in trying to get the wounded man, I had placed in the gutter, I fell behind, and as I hurried him along, we could hear the enemy closely following up, and yelping as they jumped from one tree to another. When we got back to the corn-field

again, it was plain that we were in a bad fix. Our men were all mixed up, and many of them had thrown down their guns, not knowing what to do. At this moment a rebel officer rode up, and while peering into the woods, he was struck by a bullet, and fell very heavily on his left shoulder under his horse. He was not twenty yards distant, and I supposed he was mortally wounded, but one of our men seeing him lying there, took deliberate aim, and shot him again in the back, making his death doubly certain. It was one of the most heartless acts I ever saw, and shows that the cruelty was not all on one side. This was the only man I actually saw killed, and it left a very unwelcome impression.

Turning round from this sight, a young man with long hair, white hat and shabby dress, came up.

At first I took him for a hunter who had become entangled in the battle, but a second look convinced me that he was a veritable rebel. I was unarmed, and had on a common citizens dress. So I stepped up to him with as much assurance as I could command, and said. I guess you had better give me this gun. He looked at me, and then at the men standing near me, and at once handed me his gun. I had not laid down his gun, when another came up, and on demand handed me his gun also. I then bethought myself that a non-combattant ought not to have two guns. So I threw them down; but on turning round, a third rebel came up. My success in the other two cases had rendered me more confident, and I politely, but firmly, asked him to give me his gun. He was a fine looking fellow, and he looked at me from

head to foot with unfeigned surprise, and said. "I'm no prisoner". Well said I, becoming alarmed, and siezing his gun, dont you see that there are more of our men here than of yours. "But" said he, looking round, "our men are just here". One of our own men, seeing me take hold of the gun, sprang, in an instant to my side, and with his hand on the trigger and the muzzle of his gun at the rebel's breast, demanded a surrender. In a twinkling, I seized his gun also and turned the muzzle away and said, "Stop! We dont want any more shooting here till we see how matters stand": for all this time I had a very strong suspicion that we were the prisoners, not they.
Seeing that the fellow had no disposition to shoot, I let go his gun, and in the confusion, saw him no more. There were still a few stray bullets

Battle of Sabine X Roads La
Apr 8-1864

flying, but no one could tell which side of the tree to take.

Seeing, perhaps, more than fifty men huddled together, I inquired, Is there no officer here to organize these men, and get us out of this? In a little while a Captain of our brigade came along. His sword was gone, and he was under guard. and said, "It's all up with us boys". The men who still held their guns, then dashed them down, and we were all marched off under guard, feeling cheaper perhaps than we ever did in our lives, and trying to laugh at it, and seem cheerful. I, especially was an object of sympathy Not yet three days in the army, not yet mustered into the service, very doubtful whether I ever could be, it was a serious affair, and as one after another recognized me, he would say to his comrads "And there's

the Chaplain, too. Pretty rough is n't it." We were hurried to the rear beyond Mansfield, and turned into a corn-field to camp for the night. I was without an overcoat or blanket, and the temperature was not far from freezing point. Not one quarter of the men had any covering for the night. The officers were separated from the men, and watched more closely. We gathered round the fire, and wondered what had become of this one and that one. My brother, who had gone into the fight, was not with us, and no one could give me any satisfactory account of him. The night came on, and the firing in the rear ceased.

Then we gathered round the fire, and said to the guard, that we would pray before lying down, and with uncovered heads, we asked our heavenly Father to watch tenderly

over our comrads, who still lay maimed and dying on the field. The guards looked on in mute astonishment until we were through, and then paced their beats, while we tried to sleep. It would have greatly relieved my anxiety if I had known that my brother was in another squad near by, a prisoner like myself, but safe and sound.

I shall not soon forget the kindness of captain Stearns, who seeing that I had no covering, shared with me his rubber blanket and overcoat. It was still too cold to sleep much, but I was much more favored than hundreds of others, who had no bed but the bare ground, and no covering but the sky. Not one tent or blanket was ever furnished to us.

But some one says: "Medical officers and chaplains are not held as prisoners". That is what I thought, too, and that is

the rule laid down in our army regulations; and so, I applied at once to the officer in command to be sent to the hospital to care for our wounded men until I should be released, and others interceded for me, but the commanding officer said he had no authority to release me, and at 9 o'clock the next morning I was ordered to fall into line with about eleven hundred others, for a march of about a hundred and forty miles to the town of Tyler in the interior of Texas.

Many of us started out that morning without breakfast, and without any ration for dinner, and we were obliged to beg from those, who had their haversacks, and also from negroes and white people who came out to the road "to see the Yankees" as we passed.

At night after marching about fifteen

or twenty miles we had our first ration. It consisted of about a pint of Indian corn meal, and some cured beef — what the soldiers call "salt-horse". It was utterly impossible to get water enough. The guards were very strict lest any of us should escape, and many hired negroes and other citizens to bring them water, because they knew where to find it.

The corn meal was good, but how to cook it was the question. The beef too would have answered well, if there had be a few vessels to boil the salt out of it, but not one man in ten could do any thing of the kind. Hungry men, however will eat, cooked food if they can get it, but raw, rather than starve.

Hence you might have seen groups of men sitting at the fire — one holding a rail with a handful of moistened

meal stuck on its flat side next the fire to bake it, another with a tin cup hung on the end of a stick, holding it over the fire to boil mush, another still with a slice of salt beef on the end of a spit, holding it to the fire, which, in a few minutes, drew out the salt and left it on the outside, so as to parch the lips the moment it touched them.

All the cooking was done in primative style, and the few vessels that could be obtained were kept in use nearly the whole night, the men waking each other and eating in turn.

The third night, some eighteen or twenty of us clubbed together, and when we encamped, sent a man to a neighboring house, and borrowed a large pot. With this we parboiled the salt beef, and made it quite palatable. Water was plenty there also, and after the beef was done, we took part of the

salt water, and stirred in our corn-meal rations, and soon had a grand feast of mush. We had no plates or bowls - not even spoons. Each guest made a little paddle, and stuck it into the pot, and after blowing it cool, ate what was on the paddle, and then reached back for another paddle full. This was getting supper under difficulties, but we had the satisfaction of knowing who the cooks were, and that everything was clean! We had not, however, all done eating, when a cold storm of wind and rain set in, and the few, who had rubber blankets and shelter tents, covered themselves as best they could, and the rest sat by the fire, or walked about nearly all night until the rain ceased.

Such exposure, as a matter of course, made a long sick list

in the morning, and not a few complained that they were too ill to walk, and threats were resorted to in some instances to compel them. Old Mr Robb, chaplain of the 46th Indiana, gave out the third or fourth day, and he was allowed to ride a few miles in a wagon. He was sixty-four years old, and very weak from the effects of exposure, but he was compelled to get out and march, when many of us thought that the courageous old man might at any step sink down and die. You might think that we were a very sad and solemn procession, and it certainly was very trying to men who got sick, but the spirit that animated our soldiers was not easily broken. Scarcely an hour passed without a good general laugh or a hearty cheer. The batallion that guarded us were in constant

anxiety lest we should seize their guns and make our escape, and hence many of the prisoners were very bold - perhaps impudent. Trading was freely carried on between the prisoners and the guards. Paper and gold pens, and black hats, and sword-belts and haversacks were exchanged for blankets and old quilts and pieces of carpet - anything our men could get to keep them warm at night; so that in three or four days, perhaps half them had something to sleep under.
These transactions afforded not a little amusement as we marched along. Then the prisoners and guards would, in spite of all the efforts of the officers, get into argument on the most vital questions between the North and South. Some shrewd fellow would lead off, and others would cheer him whenever he made

a good point. Of course our side always came off best in these wordy encounters.

In the town of Marshall, Texas, the citizens, mostly ladies, gathered out in great numbers, on the porches and side-walks of the principal street, as we passed through. They were evidently in their best attire, and they did not try to conceal their delight at seeing so many Yankees deprived of their arms. Some of us felt our indignation stirred almost beyond endurance as we saw group after group wave their hand-kerchiefs to the Colonel, who was riding in our front. At length, when we had reached the centre of the town, my brother, who was marching at my side, could stand it no longer, and without consulting any one, he rang out in a clear voice.

The Union for ever.

Hurrah boys hurrah,
Down with the traitors,
Up with the stars.
For we'll rally round the flag boys
Rally once again
Shouting the battle cry of freedom.

The inspiration was irresistible, and as fast as the sound was carried back the familiar words were caught up and sung with a will. We passed many planters, who had fled from Arkansas, and Louisiana and Mississippi, and were on their way with their negroes into the interior of Texas. Some of them had quite a large train of wagons and servants and cattle, and they were obliged to camp out at night.

One morning, soon after we commenced our march, we found one of these nabobs almost ready to move from his camp. He was standing beside his grand old carriage. He would

have been a splendid looking man, if he had not been quite so portly. He looked at us, with evident satisfaction, and seemed very glad to see us, but he did not have all the enjoyment to himself; for after fifty or a hundred of us in front had passed him quietly, one of the men with a keen sense of the ludicrous started the familiar song.

"Massa runned away,
Darkey stay at home."

A hundred voices chimed in at once, but when the singers came to the words.

"He's six feet one way three feet tother
And he weighs three hundred pounds."

the hit was so apparent, that the men could n't sing for laughing, and they broke out in a general shout.

The rebel soldiers, enjoyed the confusion of the nabob, almost as much

as we did; for they said he was running away from the conscription.

Another thing which kept up the spirit of the prisoners, was the hope held out, that we would get into good barracks, and have plenty of cooking utensils. Hence, when we halted within half a mile of the stockade, we thought it very hard to lie out and shiver another night, when a few steps more would have brought us into comfortable quarters. But the next morning dispelled our delusion. We marched into a field of about ten or eleven acres, with a few trees, and a great many high stumps, and young sprouts. It was surrounded by a stockade fence, in some places fourteen feet high. We were still looking for the barracks, but after a few words with the old prisoners, we were assured, that neither board, slab, tent nor blanket would be

furnished. When, at length, this truth forced itself upon us, we had no language to express the indignation and scorn we felt.

In a day or two, we had one six quart pot, and a skillet given to every eighteen men. The skillet would bake corn-bread enough for five or six men for one meal, hence the baking occupied a large proportion of the time. Then, there was not more than one third, or one fourth enough wood furnished to do the cooking. It would have been easy to go to the woods, and get all that was needed, but we had not axes enough. There was just one axe for every hundred men. There was one grubbing hoe, one spade, two shovels, one good auger and a broken one, one fro. for splitting clap-boards, and one saw and a half. There may have been one

or two other implements, but I think I have given you the exact list. Imagine how a town of twenty-one hundred people could get along with such an outfit. And yet, in less than four weeks one half of those men had comparatively good shelter. They would all have had comfortable quarters in less than a week, if they could have borrowed, or bought tools, but this was impossible. and hence, we had to take turns with the tools, and sometimes wait for hours and days to get a chance to bore a hole, or split a shingle or clapboard. I belonged to a mess of sixteen, and in about two weeks, we had a shanty sixteen feet square, with a clap-board roof and a wooden chimney, plastered inside with mud. Here, we ate, slept and cooked. It was a thronged place; and yet it was one of the best in the stockade. I have seen thirty-five

men on several occasions, when it rained, spend the night in that shanty, and they were very thankful for the accommodations.

We made a table of clapboards, and our service of plate and china was not extensive. I made myself a wooden spoon, and with this, and my pocket knife, and my fingers, I got along. I was peculiarly fortunate in getting hold of a small empty tomato can, and with this, I made a small plate, and left enough for another plate, and then we were just so much better off than some others of our mess. Trained as we were in these lessons of household economy, we feel ourselves quite competent to advise the ladies how to furnish a table in hard times.

There was a vast amount of trading done among the prisoners. I was very much surprised at this.

Soon after we arrived in prison, a

man came in one day with corn-meal, and he sold out in a very short time at a dollar a pint, in green-backs. The same day our mess bought twenty pounds of flour at a dollar a pound. There were men among the prisoners, who lived by their wits, just the same as anywhere else. They tried to keep up the price of provisions, and bring down the price of watches pens, pencils, rings, and other things that were much sought after in the South. I knew one man, who made not less than $200 in a month in this way. Of course it came off his fellow prisoners, and some of them imagined he was doing them a great favor. Some bakers and barbers and potters no doubt made considerable money honestly, but there was much swindling and gambling too.

The Texans, also, were great traders

One of the guards soon traded me out of my hat, and they tried over and over again to trade me out of my boots.
The first two weeks we received full rations – a pound of corn meal unsifted, and about a pound of beef. In the following winter, however, the ration of beef was reduced to three or four ounces. Several times the rations were stopped for a short time, and threats were often made to do so, when some mischief had been done. Another way of punishing us was to allow no one to go out for wood. This was frequently done, but the importunity of the prisoners generally prevailed very soon to have the punishment removed.
A trivial offence was often made the pretext for punishing forty-five hundred men for one or two days.

Escapes were frequent, and they were a constant source of annoyance to the authorities. These escapes were effected in various ways – sometimes by loosening a post in the stockade, & sometimes climbing over it, & sometimes by bribing the guard. There was very little difficulty in getting out. The main object was to keep the officers from finding it out, that any were missing, and many were the expedients at roll call, to escape detection. Sometimes a week would elapse before an escape was discovered.

A dark rainy night was the time to escape. This was to prevent the blood-hounds from getting the scent. As soon as it was known that a prisoner was gone, the horn was sounded for the dogs, and in a little while we could hear them howling after their game.

To escape these faithful dogs was next to an impossibility. A good blood-hound was worth several men for guarding prisoners; and hence I have heard more curses, and dreadful threats of vengeance against these poor innocent dogs, than against their guilty, inhuman masters.

Scores of men were caught, and brought back, and punished, for doing what they felt was duty - that is trying to escape. Some would be caught in a day or two, and others were not brought back for two or three weeks.

The punishments were various, and some of them barbarous and cruel. Usually they were kept a few days in the guard-house, but in some cases they were required to stand, bare-headed in the sun for hours, or to stand in some peculiar position under penalty of being shot.

One of the best men we had — a most devoted and consistent Christian, escaped, and was caught, brought back, and cruelly punished. Colonel Borders tried to make him promise that he would never try to escape again, and that he would also use his influence to induce the other prisoners not to escape. He was a noble fellow, and he seemed never to fear the face of man. And he replied. "Colonel you know you would not consent to such a thing if you were a prisoner. Our government makes it our duty to escape if we can, and as I have sworn to defend that government I cannot conscientiously comply with your demand". This was the substance of his reply. He was respectful but very firm. So the Colonel determined to make him feel his

power. He ordered him to be placed on a stump about seven or eight inches in diameter for several hours a day. The stump was cut as you have often seen with one side sloping down, and the other up, so that one toe was inclined downward and the other up - a most painful position, and yet the sentinel was ordered, if he should not stand on both feet all the time, or if he should step off, or fall off, to shoot him on the spot.

But no sooner had John Edwards got off, than he commenced singing hymns, and patriotic Union songs, in spite of the guards.

When at length the time came for exchange. Colonel Borders came up to him, and said. Well Edwards. You's going now. I have had a good deal of trouble with you,

and you may think I have treated you harshly sometimes. But you must remember, that when you took sick at Camp Bruce, I sent two men, and had a straw bed made for you." "I know it colonel said Edwards "and I thank you for it." "And" said the colonel "you must remember, that I sent you some food from my own table when you were getting better." "I know it colonel, and I thank you for it." Quite a crowd, by this time, had gathered round, both of his own men, and prisoners. "Now, said the colonel, I may be sent to the front, and some day fall into your hands; and I have just one request to make of you – that if ever I fall into your hands as a prisoner, you will treat me as I have treated you.
"No sir!" said Edwards" "Why, said the col. What do you mean?

And every man stretched his neck to hear better. "Why Col., said Edwards." If ever you become a prisoner in my hands, I'll treat you so well that you'll be ashamed of yourself." The colonel dropped his head, and shot through the crowd, while they enjoyed a hearty laugh at his expense.

Another man, for trying to escape was compelled to stand, with his bare heels on two sharp pins driven into the ground, for eight hours a day without his hat in a southern sun.

There is a long list of cruelties in connection with Camp Ford, several of them resulting in death, which their inhuman perpetrators may well wish forgotten.

Robbing Prisoners.

The robbing of prisoners was generally done on the battle field, or very

soon after surrender. Some eleven hundred, captured when I was, were not robbed at all, except a very small number, while twelve hundred captured a few day after, were nearly all robbed. Watches, knives, pocket books and money, combs, pencils and pens, and black felt hats were all taken in many cases, and when these men came in they were in a very destitute condition.

Amusements.

The amusements of the prisoners were very much like those of a regular army camp. Men could be seen every hour in groups playing chase and checkers, and cards, Others played base ball until the place became too crowded for this. The few books that could be found were read over many times, and many spent their time whittling &

carving wood, but a large proportion of the time was spent in idle talk, and in sleep. There was one violin, but there was no promiscuous dancing though there was many a hoe-down I have no recollection of seeing either a quadrille or a round dance, and I conclude that men dont like to dance with their arms round each other, and their chins over each others shoulders.

Religious Meetings.

The religious privileges were all we could expect, and indeed, I believe the religious element of our camp, made a good impression in Texas.

Mr Robb and myself were the only chaplains at first, but two others came in afterwards. We applied at once for the privilege of holding meetings, and we were permitted to hold three meetings on Sabbath, and one every night till nine o'clock. We felt very

little restraint, and prayed as fervently for the success of our arms and the downfall of slavery and the rebellion as any of you in New York. The post comander, with his wife and a number of ladies came in one Sabbath, and listened with great apparent respect while I preached. but he afterwards told two of our Captains, that I was a black-hearted Abolitionist Those meetings were not often dry and cold and lifeless. The men, who made up the audience were the very pith of the religious element of that large camp of 4500 men. The current of religious feeling, I may say religious enthusiasm was strong, and I have no doubt that many men, and perhaps some of the rebel guards, date their first deep conviction of sin, and sense of pardon, from those meetings

Sanitary Condition.

The health of the prison was remarkable, and disappointed many apparently well grounded fears. Had any one told me that I could live six weeks, when we were turned into that pen, I would have thought him a fool. But out of a hundred and thirty men of our regiment, we lost only two in fourteen months. Others lost half their men, mainly because they allowed themselves to lose heart, and had such poor facilities for cooking their food. Many precious lives could, no doubt, have been saved, if the sick could have been removed to a hospital. Without any of the conveniences of a sick room, you may see that the sick man's comrads would be almost glad when he died, because it left them a little more room in their miserable hut, and relieved them of care.

Prison life, long continued, develops some of the worst traits of human nature, and never perhaps was selfishness more gross and intense than in the prisoners' hut where one was sick or dying.

Rumors of Exchange.

It was all important to the prisoners to keep up their spirits. If they once gave way to despondency, they were almost sure to die, and hence rumors of exchange had a good sanitary effect. Every few days a report came, that several hundred men had been exchanged. When I came away I carried more than two hundred letters with me, and in nearly every one of them, the hope of speedy exchange was expressed. I have seen sober sensible men, almost beside themselves with temporary joy, when these plausible reports came in. There was not a time, perhaps,

when every man did not hope to be exchanged in three weeks. These hopes of speedy release, too, prevented many men from attempting to escape. They kept thinking it would be only a few days longer and hence nothing would be gained by escape. For my own part, I was constantly, while able to keep my feet, planning and scheming how we could get away without danger of being caught, or overpowered and brought back.

After enjoying good health for six weeks, I was suddenly taken sick and for some time I familiarized my mind with the thought of burial in the adjoining sandhill more than two thousand miles from home. But in about two weeks the fever was broken, and in three weeks more I was able to preach a short sermon, as one of the most sol-

emn meeting I ever attended.
I had obtained my parole that day, and I bid them farewell, intending to start in the morning to report at Kirby Smith's head quarters at Shreveport. There were about twenty in all, of us released. Poor Chaplain Lambe was sent back because they found out that he belonged to a colored regiment. Colonel Borders insulted him in the grossest manner and said. "We dont recognize nigger officers. You can go back into the stockade. Go off!"
When we reached Shreveport we found that we would have to wait two weeks for a boat. We drew our rations for two weeks, and turned them in to a boarding house, and strolled about the city. Here we became familiar with southern prices. In the market, small cups of coffee were freely sold at $2.30, in Con-

federate money, water mellons, at from ten to twenty dollars. Milk, was one dollar a quart. Each boarder could have any extra dish by paying for it.
Ordinarily the prices were about from ten to fifteen times as high as in New Orleans. The principal dining room in the city had a large run of custom, and the regular charge was $15 a meal.
I visited the stores. There were fine, large store-rooms, but many of them were closed, and of the others the array of empty shelves, proved that our fleet maintained something more than a "paper blockade".
At length about a thousand prisoners came on and overtook us, and we embarked for our lines.
Our hearts thrilled, when our boat pushed off, floating the white flag. But it was a timid joy. So often

had we been disappointed, that we had learned not to be too confident. Four months had now elapsed since I left home, and I had never heard a word, or seen a line from my family. As we came nearer and nearer to the Mississippi the suspense became painful. Some had heard no word from home for nearly a year – some more. What changes had come. Many of us revealed our secret fears, and hopes to each other, as we steamed along. When, therefore, we, at last, reached our lines, and were once more under the stars and stripes, now dearer than ever, and when a most unexpected letter, direct from home, was found on the cabin table, and when the first few lines revealed that wife and daughter and son were all alive and well, you must not think me

weak if I wept for joy as I sought a secret place and gave God thanks. That capture and imprisonment, is an epoch in my life, and I only speak the experience of thousands of others, when I say that nothing of a merely worldly nature, ever impressed me half so much.

After that, whenever we went out to meet the enemy, my greatest dread was not so much wounds and death, but capture. Distressing dreams, even to this day, have almost invariably some unwelcome connection with being flanked and surrounded. And the most awful nightmare is when I think I am trying to escape, and I hear the sound of the horn, and the blood-hounds coming nearer and nearer, and yet I can neither run, nor swim, nor climb a tree.

I am satisfied - satiated with war. It originates in wickedness, and it develops wickedness at almost every step. The soldier, above all things, needs the truth of God, and the grace of God in his heart, that he may resist temptation, and honor his Christian profession; but when war becomes a necessity to resist encroachments, and drive back the invader, let the Christian Church do everything possible to mitigate its evils; for it is true that nowhere is Christian effort more fruitful in blessing than in the army.
I am obliged to you, ladies and gentlemen, for your patient attention. I have detained you too long, and I bid you good night.
116th St. April 16. 1877.

Knoxville College Societies, Jan. 13th. 1888 (140)

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